

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 07095 051104Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----074424 051206Z /46

R 051027Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3451
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
USMISSION USUN NY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7095

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF PEPR IS JO LE
SUBJ: ONE ISRAELI APPROACH TO THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE PROBLEM

REF.: BEIRUT 661 (NOTAL)

1. IN MAY 31 MEETING WITH GENERAL AVRAHAM TAMIR, DIRECTOR OF THE IDF'S PLANNING DIVISION, WE ASKED HOW THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE PROBLEM MIGHT BE SOLVED. TAMIR ARGUED THAT MANY REFUGEES IN THE GULF, LEBANON AND ELSEWHERE HAD BEEN ABSORBED IN THOSE COUNTRIES AND WOULD THEREFORE NOT BE PART OF THE PROBLEM. A SOLUTION FOR THE REMAINDER COULD BE FOUND IN THE AREA ON BOTH SIDES OF THE JORDAN AND IN THE GAZA STRIP. THE REFUGEES NOW LIVING ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA COULD BE ABSORBED IN THESE AREAS. WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, EXPANSION OF THE ECONOMIC BASE, AND CONTINUED OPEN BORDERS, UP TO ANOTHER 300,000 PALESTINIANS FROM LEBANON AND ELSEWHERE COULD BE SETTLED IN JORDAN AND THE WEST BANK.
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TAMIR PARRIED QUESTIONS OF WHETHER THE LIKELY RATE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COULD REALLY SUPPORT A POPULATION INFLUX OF THIS SIZE. HE BELIEVED THE JORDAN VALLEY ITSELF WOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE IN 100,000 NEW RESIDENTS. SINCE TAMIR AVOIDED THE COMPLICATING FACTOR OF JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN THE JORDAN VALLEY, WE PRESUME THE MAJOR PART OF ARAB RESETTLEMENT IN THIS AREA WOULD BE ON THE EAST BANK SIDE OF THE VALLEY. HE NOTED THAT A POLITICAL

SOLUTION FOR THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES WOULD HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT WITH DUE CONSIDERATIONS FOR ISRAEL'S SECURITY NEEDS. IT WOULD NOT HELP TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM IN ONE COUNTRY ONLY TO SHIFT IT TO ANOTHER.

2. COMMENT: TAMIR'S COMMENTS ON THIS SUBJECT REFLECT ONE OF THE FEW TIMES WE HAVE HEARD A SENIOR ISRAELI GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL PROVIDE CONCRETE FIGURES FOR THE DISPOSITION OF REFUGEES IN THE CONTEXT OF A SETTLEMENT. TAMIR HAS BEEN IN CHARGE OF GOI POLICY PLANNING FOR THE PEACE PROCESS AND BEYOND AND THE SUBJECT OF THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEES IS PRESUMABLY ONE OF THE SUBJECTS WHICH HAS COME UNDER HIS SCRUTINY. ADDRESSEES WILL NOTE THAT HE DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY OF RESETTLEMENT ONLY IN THE WEST BANK AND JORDAN. HIS OMISSION OF A RETURN OF REFUGEES TO PRE-1967 ISRAEL WAS NOT INADVERTENT. WE DOUBT THE GOI WOULD ALLOW FORMER GALILEE AND JAFFA-RAMLEH RESIDENTS TO RETURN EXCEPT FOR A SMALL NUMBER UNDER THE FAMILY REUNION PROGRAM. FROM THE ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE, EVEN ASIDE FROM THE SECURITY ARGUMENT, THE WORLD THESE REFUGEES LIVED IN AND KNEW NO LONGER EXISTS. LEWIS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PALESTINIANS, REFUGEES, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978TELAV07095
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780234-0214
Format: TEL
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780694/aaaaddjf.tel
Line Count: 82
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 78713d92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 BEIRUT 661
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2485077
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ONE ISRAELI APPROACH TO THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE PROBLEM
TAGS: SREF, PEPR, IS, JO, LE, (TAMIR, AVRAHAM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/78713d92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014